

Editor's note

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We have here today published an article by Professor Boulton (former Vice Principal of the University of Edinburgh) and Sir Colin Lucas (former Principal of Oxford University) regarding several issues in university education. Issues mentioned in this article are faced by both developing and developed countries, the analysis of which would be useful for education reform in China.

Discussions on education reforms in China were triggered by the famous inquiry proposed by Qian Xuesen. Throughout history, the National Southwest Associated University (Xi Nan Lian Da, XNLD) has been considered the best university in China. Author Wang Zengqi wrote in his article "The New Dormitory": "A former professor from XNLD used to lecture in the United States and was asked by the Americans how XNLD was able to produce so many brilliant talents while its facilities were so poor and the living condition for its professors and students were so bad". An American historian specialized in the history of XNLD concluded that talents produced from XNLD within 8 years were greater than those from Peking University, Tsinghua University and Nankai University combined over the past 30 years. Why such a discrepancy? Freedom, was the given answer.

It is therefore considered that good management of a university must be kept separate from bureaucracy. Universities should be left to manage by their Principals and professors. In this article, the authors present an increasingly competitive era with economic strengths and widespread global science and technology. Governments, including the European Union, all rest high hopes on universities as the future of their countries. Heavy investments have been poured into universities in order to produce talents with creative thinking capabilities and to develop advanced science and technologies. By combining the freedom of the classic universities during the 18th and 19th centuries with the current needs of contemporary economic societies, the authors have elucidated the following relationships: (1) Between administrative management and freedom of development; (2) Between the immediate needs for society and long-term objectives; (3) Between producing skilled workers and talents with independent thinking abilities; (4) Between basic research and research on applied technologies; (5) Between science and the social sciences and humanities.

The discussions of these issues are relevant to Principals and professors and anyone concerned with higher education in China to further discussions regarding education reform in China. These ideas will also be helpful in furthering our exploration and creation opportunities to make China a leader in world education.

That the two authors of this article expressed their wish to publish this paper in China, in Chinese, is evidence of the British care and friendship towards Chinese education and the Chinese people. It is our honor to publish this article in *Chinese Science Bulletin*. On behalf of the journal and Chinese readers, I hereby express our sincere gratitude to Professor Geoffrey Boulton and Sir Colin Lucas for this submission.

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